



A LOOK AT LUPUS

Lupus is an autoimmune disease. This means that your immune system attacks healthy cells and tissues by mistake. This can damage many parts of the body, including the joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs, blood vessels, and brain. There are several kinds of lupus, but systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is the most common type. It can be mild or severe, and can affect many parts of the body.

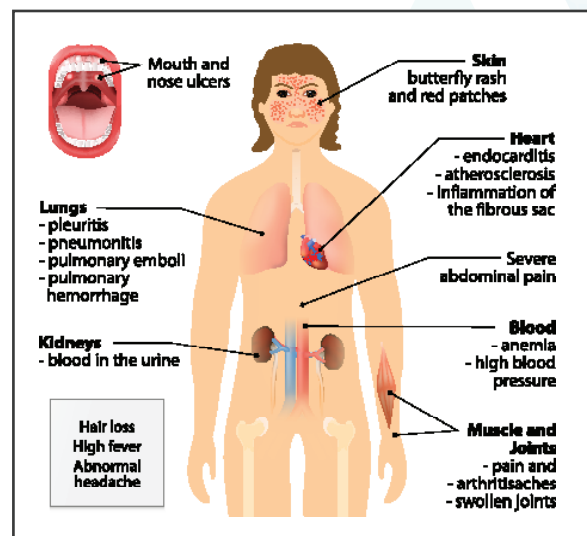
Systemic lupus erythematosus (lupus) happens when the body's defense system attacks healthy cells and tissues, instead of viruses and bacteria. This can damage many parts of the body such as the:

- » Joints
- » Skin
- » Kidneys
- » Heart
- » Lungs
- » Blood vessels
- » Brain

Anyone can get systemic lupus erythematosus (lupus), but it most often affects women. Lupus is also more common in African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native

American women than in Caucasian women. You can't catch lupus from another person. If you have lupus you will have periods of illness (flares) and wellness.

Symptoms of lupus vary, and they may come and go. The times when a person is having symptoms are called flares, which can range from mild to severe. New symptoms may appear at any time. Learning to recognize the warning signs of a flare can help with reducing or preventing the flares.



Some of the most common symptoms of lupus are:

- » Pain or swelling in the joints
- » Muscle pain
- » Fever with no known cause
- » Red rashes, most often on the face
- » Chest pain when taking a deep breath
- » Hair loss
- » Pale or purple fingers or toes
- » Sensitivity to the sun
- » Swelling in the legs or around the eyes
- » Mouth sores
- » Swollen glands
- » Feeling very tired

LESS COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- » Anemia (a decrease in red blood cells)
- » Headaches
- » Dizzy spells
- » Feeling sad
- » Confusion
- » Seizures

WHAT CAUSES LUPUS?

No one knows what causes lupus. Research suggests that genes play an important role, but genes alone do not determine who gets lupus. It is likely that many factors trigger the disease.

There is no single test to diagnose systemic lupus erythematosus (lupus). It may take months or years for your doctor to diagnose the disease. Your doctor may use many tools to make a diagnosis:

- » Medical history
- » Complete physical exam
- » Samples from the blood, skin, or kidneys for laboratory tests

If you are diagnosed with the condition, your doctor will develop a treatment plan to fit your needs. Treatments may include medicines to reduce swelling and pain, prevent or reduce flares, help the immune system and/or balance the hormones.

LIVING WITH LUPUS

Dealing with a long-lasting disease like lupus can be hard both physically and emotionally. You might think that your friends, family, and coworkers do not understand how you feel. Sadness and anger are common reactions. Besides working with your doctor to determine a treatment plan, there are a few things you can do to help you live with lupus:

- » Learn to recognize the warning signs of a flare so that you and your doctor might reduce or prevent them. These warning signs include:
 - Feeling more tired
 - Pain
 - Rash
 - Fever
 - Stomachache
 - Headache
 - Dizziness
- » Eat a proper diet, exercise, and learn relaxation techniques to help cope with stress. A healthy lifestyle, as well as quitting smoking, will also reduce your risk for heart disease associated with lupus. Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- » Develop and maintain a good support system of family, friends, medical professionals, community organizations, and support groups.

Source: <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/lupus>

